

## LIVING HISTORY AND EXPERIMENTAL ARCHAEOLOGY

### *A meeting with members of the Red Wyvern Society*

Adrian and Elaine set up the Red Wyvern Society, which seeks to re-create as many aspects as possible of life in Britain in the period of the Wars of the Roses, 1450-1500. To bring these troubled times back to life the Society presents re-enactments of battles and of everyday life for example archery practice, entertainments and most importantly cooking. The Society usually depicts the Clifford Household, one of the most powerful in England at the time and supporters of the House of Lancaster. The Red Wyvern Society is one of many interested in this period and members travel to different parts of the country for re-enactments.

Historical re-enactment has become very popular in the last twenty years and there are societies for most periods such as the Sealed Knot for the Civil Wars of the 1640s. People join for a number of reasons; an interest in history, an opportunity to take part in martial arts or the crafts of the time and for the chance to act.

Members are also involved in researching the period and in making authentic copies of objects then in use. The popularity of historical re-enactment has resulted in the growth of an industry to reproduce articles such as armour, pottery and weapons.

Both speakers were dressed in the

clothes of the period, which they had made. Clothes were bright and made of wool or linen and well worn. Adrian wore colourful woollen hose, one leg red and one yellow. His shoes were leather and known as turnsoles. Elaine was in a linen kirtle gown over a chemise. As the household cook she needed to kirtle up her skirts to try and keep them from the fire as hearth death was a common cause of death in women. The wearing and making of the clothes of the period has led to greater understanding of their comfort and the wear and tear on them. In the late 15th century pockets were unknown and everyday utensils were hung from a belt around the waist.

Elaine described her role as cook to the household and showed the group a variety of utensils that she uses as she cooks over an open wood fire. It was interesting to see that the design of cook's knives has not changed since the Romans. Lord Clifford's army was always on the move and the cook tended to go ahead of the soldiers to the camp. Elaine cooks the food of the time at re-enactments, sometimes for as many as three hundred. The diet was principally bread, cheese, vegetables, fish and a little meat, which was usually rancid and had to be flavoured by fruits. Dishes such as fish in salt dough, stews, soups and pig roast are features of re-enactments. There was no tea

or coffee and the household drank leaf infusions, ale and wine.

Adrian then dressed in the armour of the time and described and demonstrated some the weaponry used including different types of swords and a crossbow. He explained that for the ordinary man his armour and indeed his clothes might be a hotchpotch of pieces retrieved from the battle field or handed down by will. He wore plate armour protecting legs, arms, head and stomach. Gauntlets were worn to fend off sword blows. Beneath the armour he wore a thickly padded waistcoat called a jack which gave good protection from arrows, as the head became entangled in the wool padding. He said that most fighting men were foot soldiers and fought out of loyalty to their Lord when his interests were threatened.

Adrian and Elaine then answered a number of questions from the floor and those present were able to look at and handle the armour, weapons and cooking utensils on display. Everyone was struck by the enthusiasm of the speakers and their obvious enjoyment of re-enacting life in the late 15th century and discovering more about the period.

Phyllis Rouston May 19th 2002

(Appleby Archaeology Talks begin again in the Autumn.)

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# Discovering a Landscape of Industry

## *A talk by Andrew Lowe*

On Tuesday April 2nd the Appleby Archaeology Group enjoyed a very informative talk from Andrew Lowe, Building and Conservation Officer from the Lake District National Park.

He began his well illustrated talk with a slide of post card images of the Lake District. These popular images however do not convey the rich industrial heritage of the area. Industry has been present from prehistoric times but Mr Lowe concentrated on industry since the Elizabethan age. He emphasised that it was the landscape that provided the raw materials and it was the use of those that influenced the landscape. Three elements were highlighted; the rocks, the woodlands and water. 200 years ago it would have been a busier landscape than today with men mining slate, copper and lead from the rocks, bark peelers and charcoal burners working in the woods with the water providing power and a means of transport.

Mr Lowe described slate quarrying in some detail, mentioning the skills of splitting and dressing the slate. There was an expansion in production at the time of the industrial revolution when slates were required for roofing the expanding towns of the north. The evidence of this industry is clear to see in walls and buildings and in the spoil heaps and sled tracks at the worked sites. Minerals, such as lead and copper were mined. The 16th century saw a development in mining as the Elizabethans searched for gold, silver and copper ores. The main mining centre was Newlands Valley near Keswick. Miners were brought from Germany, as at that time their techniques were the

more advanced. Mines were soon opened in other areas. Copper ores were mined at Coppermines Valley near Conistone over a long period. The great working period there was the 1830s and 40s when up to 600 men were employed and 13 waterwheels were in use. Today 19th century remains of tramways, wheel houses and buildings can be seen. The adits, horizontal tunnels, and shafts that can be seen in the rocky landscape are evidence of mining.

Iron ore in the form of haematite has been mined for centuries. Charcoal was required to smelt that ore. Until the 18th century iron was smelted in "bloomeries" but in 1736 the Duddon Iron Furnace began production using charcoal, from the local woods, and bellows powered by water from the river. Backbarrow Furnace on the river Leven in Furness was the longest functioning blast furnace working from 1711-1916. Debris from smelting can be seen on the ground, the nature of the debris indicating the process used. There are remains of the building themselves and a good example is the reconstructed Duddon Iron Furnace which was one of the first industrial buildings to be scheduled in the 1960s.

The woodland industries included coppicing for charcoal, bark peeling for tanning, bobbin making and the weaving of thin oak lathes to make the "spelk" or "swill" basket. Charcoal was the principal smelting agent for metallurgical industries and an important ingredient of gunpowder. The gunpowder industry was established in the 18th century in the south of the Lake District where charcoal and water

power were available. Evidence of these industries abounds in the woodlands from the signs of coppicing, track ways, remains of the charcoal burners huts, and burning platforms up to 25 feet in diameter. The woodlands were managed to provide the resources and that is why so many survive in the south of the county.

Waterpower was required for mining and for some of the woodland industries. Water mills are often found close together to make use of the available power, a good example is Stavely. Nearby Backbarrow has one of the oldest rows of terraced houses in the Lakes, dating from the 1780s, built to house the mill workers. The "blue" used in laundering was made at Blue Mill, Backbarrow. The lakes were an economic lifeline and until the coming of the railways, were with packhorses the main means of transport. Improvements were made to the roads with the introduction of turnpikes and mile posts. In 1847 the railway reached Windermere and in 1859 Conistone. The railways provided a transport system for industry but before long the owners saw the opportunity to develop tourism.

Mr Lowe concluded by suggesting that a study of place names such as Papermill Coppice, Spindle Coppice, Spark Bridge and Great Ore Gate provide a clue to the industrial heritage of the Lake District.

Phyllis Rouston





## CRAKE TREES, Crosby Ravensworth

This was a joint visit with the Crosby Ravensworth Local History Society (although organised by myself) and as the site is prominent in the parish, it was not surprising that members from that society greatly outnumbered members from our Group.

Crake Trees is a ruined farmhouse built on a small plateau on the western slope of the valley of the Lyvennet Beck facing towards the northeast. The house is recorded by the RCHM in the publication for Westmorland (1936) and described by Pevsner in his *Buildings of England: Cumberland and Westmorland* (1967 repr. 1992) p244. It is also recorded in *The Medieval Fortified Buildings of Cumbria* by Denis R Perriam and John Robinson (CWAAS 1998) p275. The actual building is in private hand and the old barn is being converted into a home, but two public footpaths meet at the site and the ruins can be easily viewed from these. An inspection by English Heritage in 1990 revealed that the ruins were deteriorating rapidly but the inspector also noticed in the field surrounding the house and in the field on the slope on the hill behind it, that there were a number of "humps and bumps" obviously associated with the site. So, in 1999, a team from English Heritage undertook both an architectural survey of the house and a ground survey of the "humps and bumps" the results were published in 1991.

For our visit we were very fortunate to have the two leaders of that team to take us round – Ian Goodall who did the architectural survey and Chris Dunn who did the archaeology survey. Chris Dunn was keen to emphasise that the site provides a continuous record of what had been a late medieval

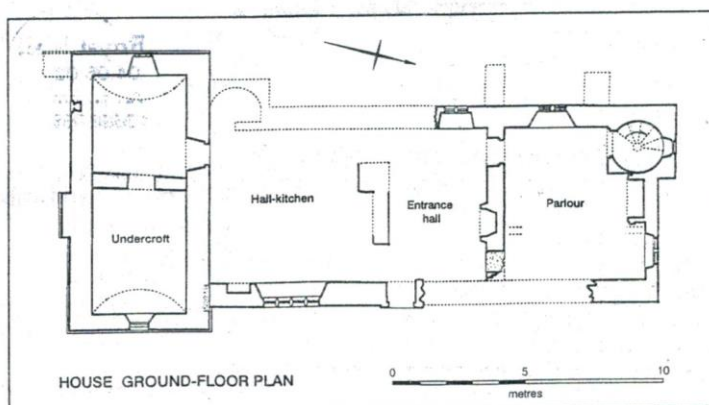
house that was rebuilt in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century as a substantial "high status" farmhouse which then went into decline over some 300 years before being abandoned in the early 1900s. In addition, it was possible also to trace changes in the immediate landscape that are associated with the use of the house from medieval strip ploughing to a 19<sup>th</sup> century "stack yard" type farmstead to a 1950s milking parlour which was being demolished during our visit. Of the house itself, Ian Goodall said that their survey revealed that what had been written previously on the house was probably incorrect (Pevsner, Perriam & Robinson) and it never had a fortified tower. The surviving medieval barrel vault at the south end was a store with a solar above and a timber hall linked this to the servants/animal quarters at the north end. Sometime in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the timber hall and servants quarters were removed and rebuilt in stone with a newel stair set into the north west corner to give access to new family living quarters on the first floor. There after there were modifications and sub divisions until the place was finally occupied by two labourers' families

and then abandoned. It is expected that without consolidation the remaining upstanding walls will collapse within ten years.

Outside the building the story of the immediate landscape is more complex and cannot really be described here without the help of the detailed plans in the report but on site Chris Dunn took us through it with clarity and a great deal of enthusiasm. But even without the plans it is possible to trace the line of several hollow ways and a later purpose built track down the western hillside that show that this was the original approach to the house. And on the northwest side of the house there was probably an ornamental garden with a pond that was laid out at the time of the 17<sup>th</sup> century rebuild.

The visit was an excellent example of the modern "holistic" approach to an important site and showed us how much can be learnt without digging a single pit! It is all in the English Heritage report of which Phyllis has a copy if anyone wishes to read it – otherwise it costs £10.

Harry Hawkins





# SUMMER EVENTS

## **Askham Fell Walk: Moor Divock cairns and circles**

Monday 24th June, 6.30pm

An evening walk to explore the prehistoric landscape of cairns and circles on Askham Fell. Experience the mystery and ritual of the Bronze Age followed by a pint in the pub!

Follow the road from Askham to Helton. Turn right through the village onto the fell road. Park one mile onto the fell near the track at Grid Ref. NY497 214

## **Axe me another**

**Discover New Technology  
4,000 years Ago**

Tullie House Museum, Carlisle  
Exhibition on now until 6th October

The exhibition explores aspects of the late Neolithic 3250BC and the early Bronze Age 1800BC in Cumbria

## **The Archaeology of Smardale with Tom Clare**

Saturday 20th July, 1.00pm

A guided walk with Tom Clare (previously the County Archaeologist for Cumbria) exploring the settlements, landscape and archaeology of Smardale. Please bring walking boots and waterproofs (just in case).

Meet at Ravenstonedale outside the school at 1.00pm. Return approx 5.00pm.

## **Shap Abbey and its Landscape**

Monday 22nd July, 7.00pm

A walk and talk around the grounds of Shap Abbey with Harry Hawkins. This is a visit arranged by Shap Local History Group but we are allowed to come along.

Meet in the Abbey carpark at 6.45

## **Visit: Stainmoor Gap**

Saturday 27th July 2002,  
2.00pm

Following the talk about the archaeology of the Stainmoor Gap we will be visiting the area to visit some of the sites. Led by Harry Hawkins and Phyllis Rouston.

Meet at the Appleby Grammar School Carpark at 1.45pm or at the centre of Brough at 2.00pm.

## **AA Landscape Project:**

Following the difficulties encountered last year due to Foot and Mouth we are now moving forward with our Landscape Project. This June we will be visiting several areas including Bleatam, Murton and Kirkland to choose a suitable location for our pilot study of landscape in the Eden Valley.

If you would like to be involved and have not already been contacted please telephone Harry on 01768 864340.

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